CA2 ALX 9
1973A44
c.2

CA2 ALX 9 1973A44
Alberta Legislative Building.
2
3 3398 00307 8317

c2

Alberta
LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026 with funding from
Legislative Assembly of Alberta - Alberta Legislature Library

INTRODUCTION

Alberta's first legislators were men of vision. In 1906, when they began to plan a permanent home for the new government, the breadth of their plans showed a sound faith in the future of this province and its people.

The design they chose reflects the nature of the province itself. It combines light and space, beauty and richness.

Generations of Albertans have come to recognize in this building an enduring quality of simple grandeur which makes it as fitting today in the midst of highrise towers as it was in the days when it shared this historic site with the simple buildings of Fort Edmonton.

The Legislative Building and its impressive grounds have provided an elegant background for momentous events in the history of this province. For decades it has been a tribute to those who had confidence in Alberta's future. Today, it is a source of pride and pleasure to all Albertans.

HOW THE GOVERNMENT WORKS

Alberta's legislative building is the centre of government for the province. Here, the elected representatives of the people of Alberta meet in session to debate and enact laws and administer policies which affect this province and its citizens.

The building's impressive size and richness of design give it an atmosphere of permanence and reflect the dignity and importance of the proceedings which take place here.

At present there are 75 seats in the Alberta legislature. Following an election, the political party which has gained a majority of seats in the legislature, forms the government. The leader of the party becomes Premier of the province. The Premier appoints the members of the Cabinet, or inner circle of legislators who are responsible for translating into action the policies approved by members of the Legislative Assembly. The members of the Cabinet are called Ministers and each Cabinet Minister has responsibility for one or more departments of government. A staff of employees or civil servants handles the day-to-day business of government. A senior civil servant acts as permanent administrative head — or Deputy Minister — of each department. Although Cabinet Ministers change with the political party in power, the Deputy Minister remains as general manager of the department, thus ensuring there is no interruption either in the operation of the department or in its service to the people of the province.

Although Alberta is a comparatively young province, its government has a rich tradition behind it because of its close link with the long-established parliamentary system of Great Britain. Adding weight and dignity to all important ceremonial occasions, is the presence of the Lieutenant Governor, the Queen's representative in Alberta. Appointed by Canada's Governor General in Council, the Lieutenant Governor is chosen from among distinguished citizens who have made important contributions to the life of the province.

Although this building was originally designed to contain most of the offices concerned with the business of government, the steady growth of the province and expansion of government services have meant that other government offices had to be established throughout Edmonton and the province. However, the ministerial and administrative staffs of the various departments are still housed in the wings of this building.

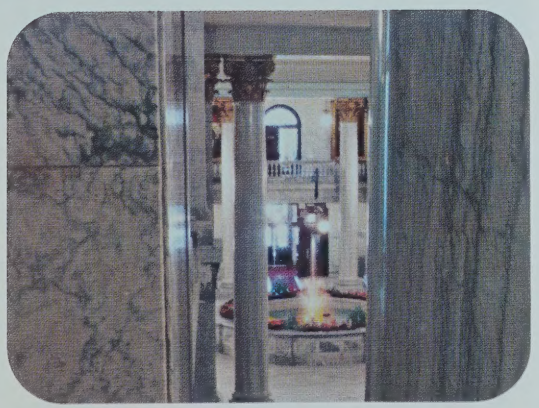
The legislative building is the seat of provincial authority and, because of this, it is formal in design and imposing in appearance. But it is also a bright and attractive building meant for people. And many people use it .... employees carrying out the work of the various government departments; visitors from all parts of Canada and abroad; Albertans who come to watch their elected representatives in assembly; delegations making their views known to the legislators; school children from all over the province viewing "government in action" — and private citizens who simply come to enjoy the quiet beauty and historic atmosphere of the building and its surroundings.

THE LEGISLATURE

The Legislative Chamber is the meeting hall for the Legislative Assembly. It is the heart of the government — the place where the laws governing this province are made.

The richly carpeted, high-domed chamber is located in the central area of the legislative building at the top of the grand staircase leading up from the main rotunda. The focal point of the room is a high-backed chair which sits on a raised platform at the south end of the chamber under the Royal Coat of Arms. This is the chair occupied by the Speaker of the House, an elected member of the Assembly who is usually a member of the governing party. The Speaker is chosen by the Premier. It is his duty to control debate in the House and to ensure that the rules of parliamentary procedure are followed.

Arranged in rows on either side of the chamber are the desks of Members of the Legislative Assembly. The government party sits on the Speaker's right hand and the Opposition on his left. Each desk has a microphone connecting it to the public address system. The front row of seats on the government side is occupied by the Premier and members of his Cabinet. The Leader of the Opposition sits opposite the Premier. In the centre of the chamber are two chairs for the Clerk of the Assembly and his assistant and on either side of the Speaker's platform are chairs for the pages or messengers who run errands for the Members.



THE HISTORY

Alberta became a province of Canada in 1905. In March, 1906, the first government under the leadership of Hon. A. C. Rutherford met in Edmonton's Thistle Rink. It was the job of these first legislators to choose a site for a building to house the offices of the newly-formed government. Several possibilities were considered — Calgary, Banff, Red Deer and Edmonton. When the final vote was taken, it was 16 to 8 in favor of Edmonton becoming the capital city.

The exact choice of a site combined both historical significance and excellent location. High on the river bank looking south over the beautiful North Saskatchewan River valley, the legislative building stands on the site of Fort Edmonton — a Hudson's Bay fur trading post established in 1830. It was the last of many such forts built in this area by both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. The Chief Factor's home — or "Big House" — once stood on the spot now occupied by the legislative building. Photographs of the building under construction show the magnificent structure dwarfing the buildings and palisades of the historic fort below it. The last buildings of Fort Edmonton were dismantled in 1915 to make room for a bowling green, still in use today. A cairn on the southern slope of the legislative grounds marks the site of the fort's northeast bastion.

Alberta's legislative building was designed by A. M. Jeffers, architect and chief of the engineering branch of the Department of Public Works. His task was to create a building which would be both beautiful and practical — one which future generations would point to with pride.

Excavation for the building began in August, 1907 — but work proceeded slowly because of problems with quicksand. To put the building on a solid foundation, it was necessary to sink steel-reinforced concrete pilings. Despite the delay, construction was well underway by 1909 and, on October 1 of that year, the cornerstone was laid by Canada's Governor General Earl Gray. Under the stone, at the northeast corner of the building, are copies of the three Edmonton newspapers of the day, a set of plans for the building, coins and currency, a copy of the paysheet for the workers and a list of men who supervised the project. Although the building was not

HOW THE GOVERNMENT WORKS

Alberta's legislative building is the centre of government for the province. Here, the elected representatives of the people of Alberta meet in session to debate and enact laws and administer policies which affect this province and its citizens.

The building's impressive size and richness of design give it an atmosphere of permanence and reflect the dignity and importance of the proceedings which take place here.

At present there are 75 seats in the Alberta legislature. Following an election, the political party which has gained a majority of seats in the legislature, forms the government. The leader of the party becomes Premier of the province. The Premier appoints the members of the Cabinet, or inner circle of legislators who are responsible for translating into action the policies approved by members of the Legislative Assembly. The members of the Cabinet are called Ministers and each Cabinet Minister has responsibility for one or more departments of government. A staff of employees or civil servants handles the day-to-day business of government. A senior civil servant acts as permanent administrative head — or Deputy Minister — of each department. Although Cabinet Ministers change with the political party in power, the Deputy Minister remains as general manager of the department, thus ensuring there is no interruption either in the operation of the department or in its service to the people of the province.

Although Alberta is a comparatively young province, its government has a rich tradition behind it because of its close link with the long-established parliamentary system of Great Britain. Adding weight and dignity to all important ceremonial occasions, is the presence of the Lieutenant Governor, the Queen's representative in Alberta. Appointed by Canada's Governor General in Council, the Lieutenant Governor is chosen from among distinguished citizens who have made important contributions to the life of the province.

Although this building was originally designed to contain most of the offices concerned with the business of government, the steady growth of the province and expansion of government services have meant that other

A long table in the middle of the chamber holds the mace, a heavy gold staff which is the traditional symbol of authority in the Legislative Assembly. The mace is brought into the chamber by the Sergeant-at-Arms, at the beginning of each day's proceedings. It must be in place when the Speaker is in his chair — and before any legislation can be debated or voted on.

The Legislative Chamber is ringed by galleries. The press gallery for members of the press and radio is above the Speaker's chair, facing the Assembly. Galleries for members of the public are at either side of the Chamber and facing the Speaker is the Speaker's gallery where his guests sit by invitation.

The ceremony which accompanies the opening of the Legislature, usually in February, is one of the most colorful events of the year at the legislative building. With a fanfare of trumpets, the Lieutenant Governor, in state dress, attended by members of the military in colourful fulldress uniform, is ushered into the Legislative Chamber to read the speech from the throne. The speech outlines the business which the government party plans to put before the house in the coming session.

During the session, Members debate the throne speech and also the budget speech, delivered by the Provincial Treasurer. The budget speech explains what projects and services the government plans to spend its funds on during the year. Before any new bill is approved in the Legislature and becomes law, it must pass three readings. This work is usually done by committee of the whole house. In order that each clause of the bill can be thoroughly discussed, the rules of parliamentary procedure are set aside. The Speaker leaves his chair and the mace is taken from its customary spot on the central table and placed below it.

In addition to the Legislative Chamber, there are smaller council and committee rooms where members of the public can conduct business with the government.

The Alberta Legislature has many firsts to its credit. It was the first Legislative Assembly in the British Empire to have a woman member and the first Legislature in Canada to allow its proceedings to be televised on a regular basis.

THE HISTORY

Alberta became a province of Canada in 1905. In March, 1906, the first government under the leadership of Hon. A. C. Rutherford met in Edmonton's Thistle Rink. It was the job of these first legislators to choose a site for a building to house the offices of the newly-formed government. Several possibilities were considered — Calgary, Banff, Red Deer and Edmonton. When the final vote was taken, it was 16 to 8 in favor of Edmonton becoming the capital city.

The exact choice of a site combined both historical significance and excellent location. High on the river bank looking south over the beautiful North Saskatchewan River valley, the legislative building stands on the site of Fort Edmonton — a Hudson's Bay fur trading post established in 1830. It was the last of many such forts built in this area by both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. The Chief Factor's home — or "Big House" — once stood on the spot now occupied by the legislative building. Photographs of the building under construction show the magnificent structure dwarfing the buildings and palisades of the historic fort below it. The last buildings of Fort Edmonton were dismantled in 1915 to make room for a bowling green, still in use today. A cairn on the southern slope of the legislative grounds marks the site of the fort's northeast bastion.

Alberta's legislative building was designed by A. M. Jeffers, architect and chief of the engineering branch of the Department of Public Works. His task was to create a building which would be both beautiful and practical — one which future generations would point to with pride.

Excavation for the building began in August, 1907 — but work proceeded slowly because of problems with quicksand. To put the building on a solid foundation, it was necessary to sink steel-reinforced concrete pilings. Despite the delay, construction was well underway by 1909 and, on October 1 of that year, the cornerstone was laid by Canada's Governor General Earl Gray. Under the stone, at the northeast corner of the building, are copies of the three Edmonton newspapers of the day, a set of plans for the building, coins and currency, a copy of the paysheet for the workers and a list of men who supervised the project. Although the building was not

complete until 1912, the first session of the Legislature was held here on November 30, 1911.

Alberta's legislative building was officially opened on September 3, 1912 by the Duke of Connaught, then Governor General of Canada. Today, more than 60 years later, visitors will agree with the Governor General who congratulated the people of Alberta on the design and construction of a legislative building which reflected "the dignity of the duties" which would be performed there for many years to come.

THE DESIGN

Alberta's legislative building has been described as "an architectural masterpiece." Built in the form of a cross and perfectly proportioned, it combines beauty and elegance with simplicity.

The central part of the building which houses the circular rotunda, the grand staircase, the Legislative Chamber and the Legislative Library, extends north and south. It is flanked on the east and west by wings which are 130 feet in length and which contain offices of the ministerial and administrative staffs of the government. At the centre of the cross is the impressive dome which has become a landmark of Alberta's capital city. Eight high-arched windows encircle the "drum" of the dome which is covered in terracotta tiles, treated to expand and contract with changes in temperature. The "lantern" or lookout tower at the very top of the dome is actually a small room which offers a magnificent view of the surrounding countryside.

Six immense Corinthian columns mark the main entrance to the building, which faces north. Above the entrance, is a massive stone carving of the Alberta Arms. Smaller entrances to the east, west and south wings repeat the design of the main entrance. The material used on the exterior of the first storey — or base of the building — is granite from Vancouver Island. The remaining four storeys are finished in Alberta sandstone from the Glenbow Quarry near Calgary.

Visitors are always impressed with the main rotunda which is brilliantly lighted and open to the vaulted dome 180 feet above. Encircled by stately marble pillars and centred with a large flower-decked marble fountain, it serves as a memorable introduction to the building.

Across the rotunda and directly south of the main entrance is the grand staircase which leads to the Legislative Chamber. Three different types of marble were used in this section of the building. The green marble on the base of the chamber came from Pennsylvania. Grey marble from Quebec was used in the pillars and base of the rotunda, in the halls and in the main section of the staircase. A third type, imported from Italy, was used for the stair railings and for the third floor. The terrazzo floors were laid by Italian artisans, brought to Edmonton solely for that purpose.

Throughout the building, beautiful features such as hand-carved oak doors, mahogany panelling, stained glass windows and brass fittings have been lovingly cherished and preserved with the result that none of the building's charm and grace has diminished with the years.

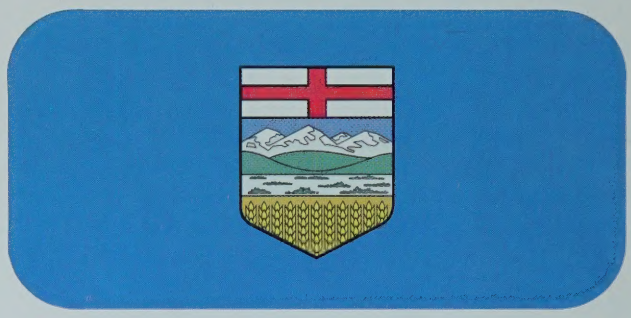
The impressive appearance of the building is also enhanced by its striking setting. Thirty-two acres of gently sloping lawn dotted with flower beds and fountains surround it. Stately rows of Russian poplar and American mountain ash line its drives while evergreens and groves of elm, oak and birch mingle on the spacious lawns. The bowling green and bandshell, both on the south lawn, attract large crowds in summer. Also in the area is the government greenhouse which supplies flowers for the building as well as bedding plants for the legislative grounds and for other government buildings throughout the province. One of the most difficult problems facing the staff every year is planting the thousands of flowers that make up the floral emblems which delight visitors — the Canadian flag and the crest of Alberta.

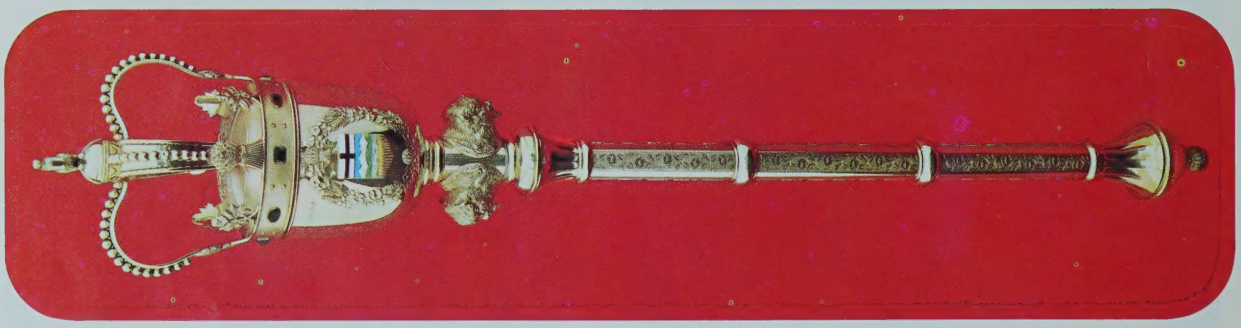
Highlights of any tour of the legislative building include a visit to the Provincial Library on the second floor, directly below the Legislative Chamber. It contains more than 60,000 volumes, including government records from all parts of Canada and the United States, books of law and copies of Hansard dating back to Confederation. Used mainly as a research library, it is open to the public as well as to Members.

The Centennial Carillon on the fifth floor was a gift from the Province to the people of Alberta to mark the 1967 Centennial of Canada. It was dedicated December 1, 1966. It can be operated manually or automatically

and makes the sound of 305 bells. Twelve speakers set in the dome of the building carry the sound of the chimes across the city.

Inside and out, the visitor to the legislative building is constantly stopping in his tour to look more closely at some treasure or memento from another year . . . a cairn, a plaque, a piece of furniture.
In the library, the first mace used in the Alberta Legislature may catch the eye. Portraits of people who played an important role in the government and public life of the province hang in the corridors of the third and fourth floors. Battle flags of Edmonton and district battalions in World War One surround the main floor rotunda. And, on the fifth floor, a pictorial history of the area offers visitors — particularly the young people — an opportunity to trace the development of this province and to gain a better understanding of our colourful heritage.





The Alberta Rose

The floral emblem of the Province of Alberta is the wild rose (Rose Acicularis). This flower grows profusely in all parts of the province brightening fields and roadsides with its varying pink-toned petals. The wild rose was chosen in the Floral Emblem Act of 1930.

The Alberta Flag

In 1968 the Government of Alberta authorized the design and use of an official flag. A flag bearing the Arms of Alberta on a royal ultramarine blue background was adopted and the Flag Act proclaimed June 1st, 1968.

Proportions of the flag are two by length and one by width with the official Arms seven-elevenths of the width of the flag carried in the centre.

The flag may be used by citizens of the Province and others in a manner befitting its dignity and importance but no other banner or flag that includes the Alberta Arms may be assumed or used.

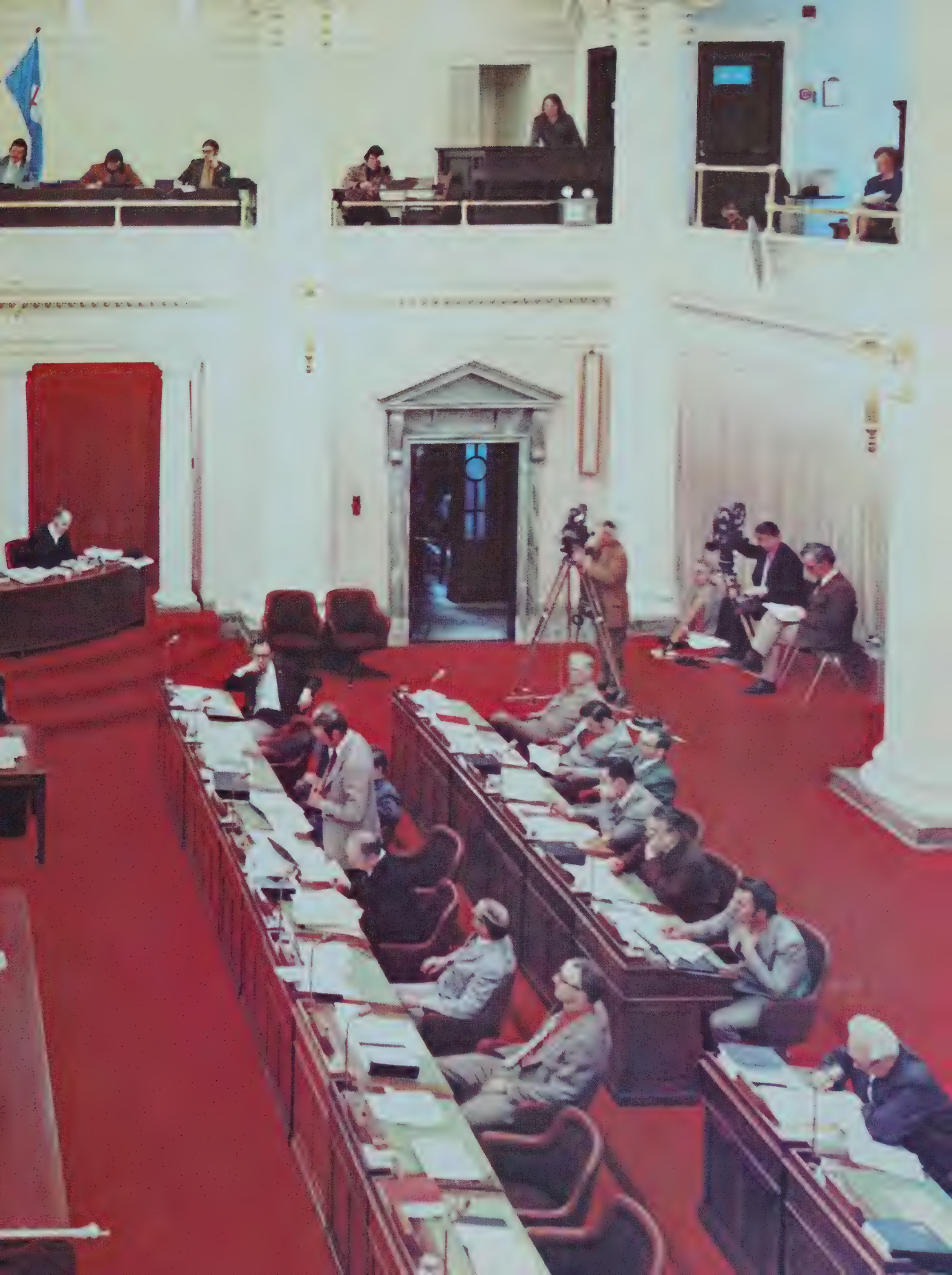
The Provincial Mace

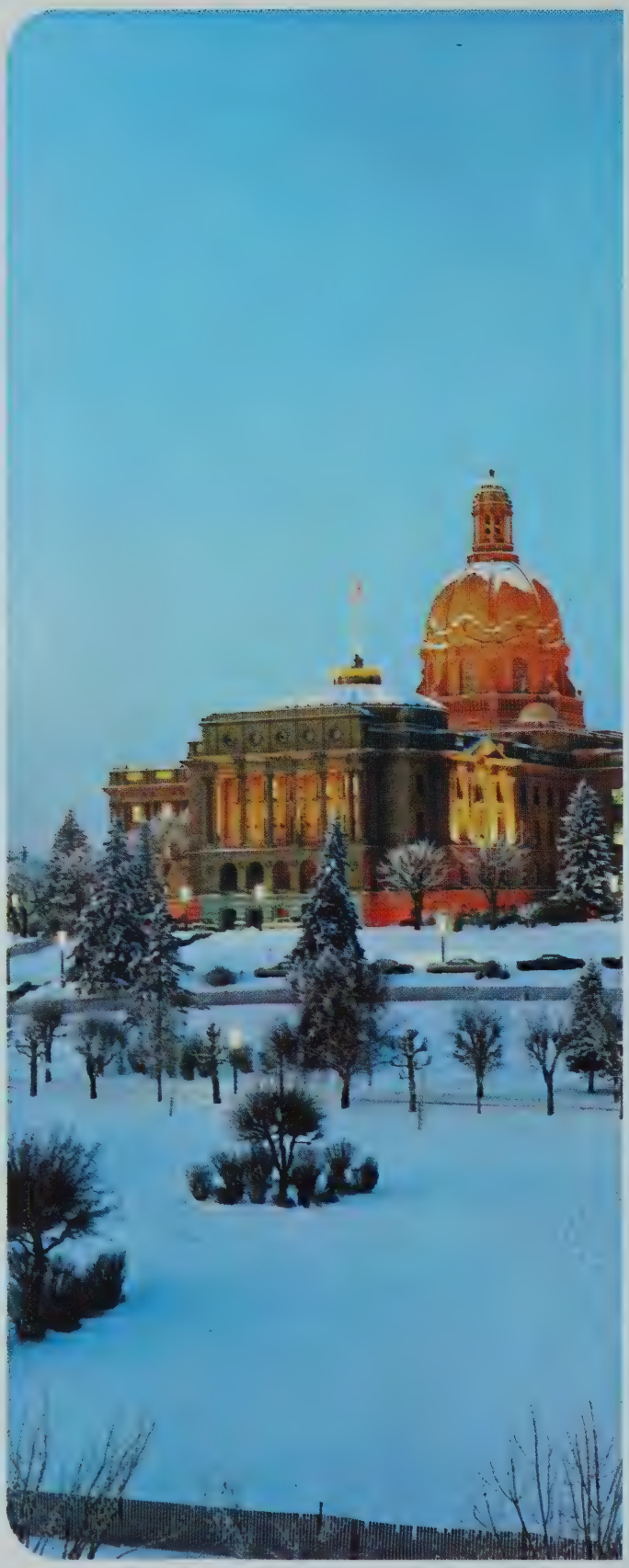
The provincial mace, traditional symbol of authority of the Legislative Assembly, is carried by the sergeant-at-arms into the assembly at the opening of each daily sitting.

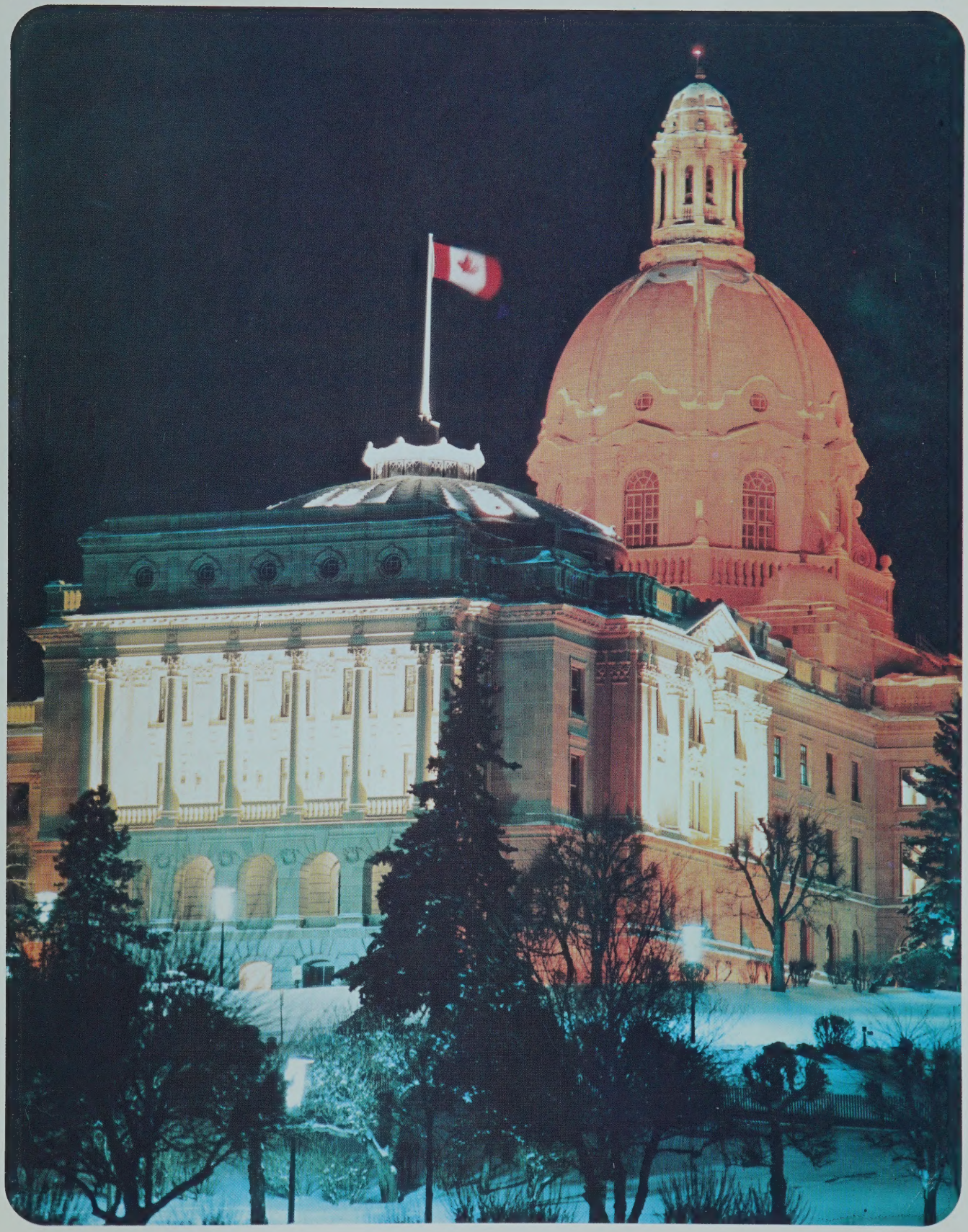
Used as a weapon in medieval times, ceremonial maces were first borne by the royal bodyguard of Richard I, and came into general use in the 13th century. Gradually, they became more intricate in design and were embellished with costly gems and rich metals.

The history and culture of the province is borne out in the design of Alberta's mace. It features the crown, the wild rose, sheaves of wheat, buffalo heads and armorial arms. The first letter of each gem surrounding the crown — Amethyst, Lapis Lazuli, Beryl, Emerald, Ruby, Topaz and Aquamarine — combine to spell ALBERTA.

The Civil Service Association of Alberta presented the mace to the people of Alberta in 1955 commemorating the province's Golden Jubilee.







PRINTED IN CANADA
metropolitan printing, edmonton, alberta